

TARNISHED IMAGE. Robert McNamara, the brilliant, dynamic, superefficient Defense Secretary, built up as the number one whiz kid of two administrations, has come upon hard times imagewise. Once considered almost infallible he is now the object of growing disenchantment both in and out of Congress. After seven inspection trips to Vietnam his assessments of the war there appear consistently wrong. European observers who admire his cost accounting maintain that McNamara's defense advice to President Johnson has proven fallacious. They fault McNamara for not realizing that the number one U.S. enemy in Asia is not little North Vietnam but massive Red China. It is no secret to McNamara that Red China is currently stockpiling nuclear weapons, that it will have operational by 1967 a medium-range ballistic missile, that it plans to equip submarines with nuclear rockets, that it is preparing its people for a war against the U.S., that until it is ready to wage such a war it wants the Viet Cong and Ho Chi Minh to keep fighting the U.S. endlessly. McNamara is accused of having fallen into a Red Chinese trap from which he refuses to extricate himself because he would then have to admit an error in basic judgment.